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12 April 1966

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# CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

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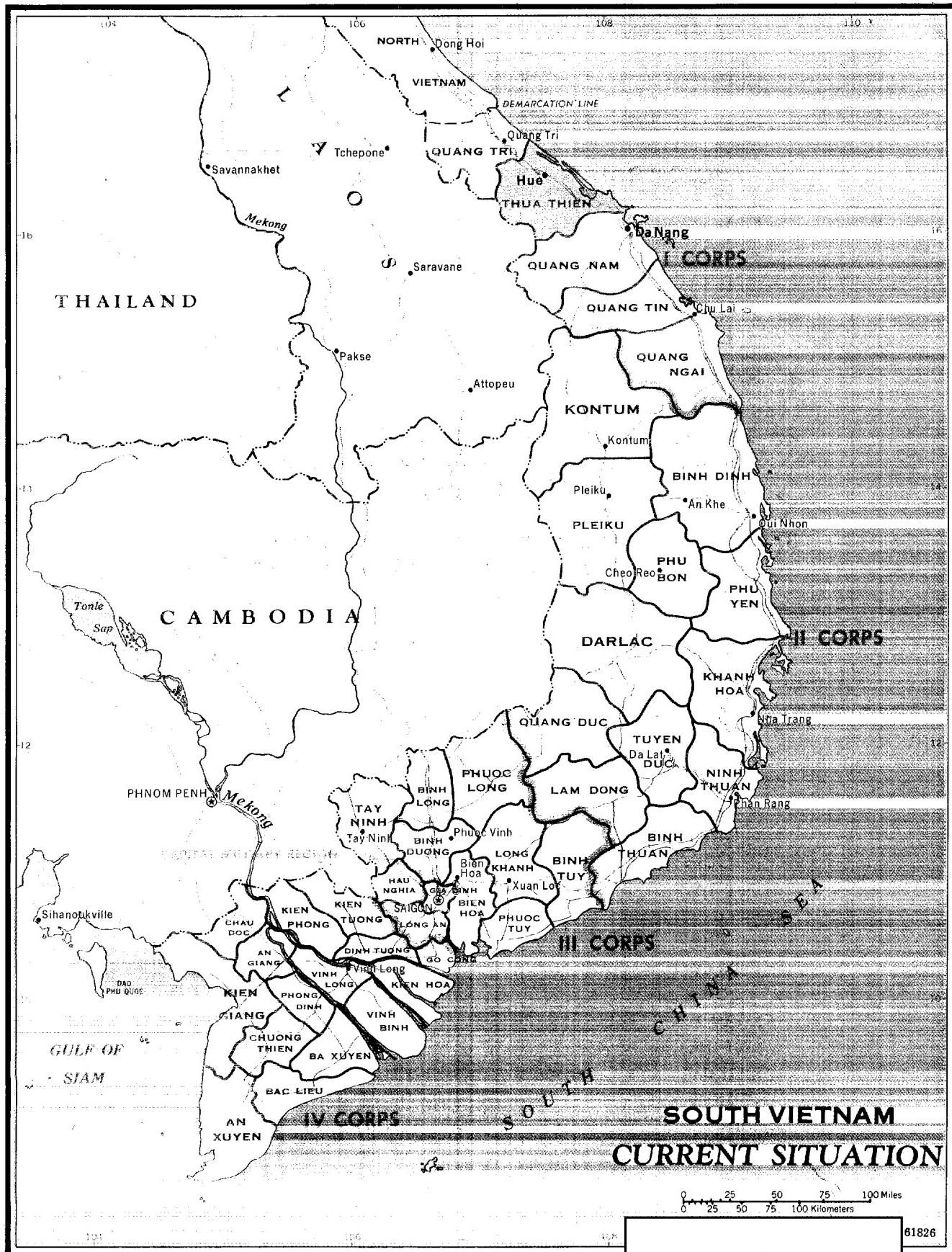
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### \*Vietnam: (Information as of 4:30 AM EST)

Political Developments in South Vietnam: The government-sponsored National Political Congress convened in Saigon today amid renewed Buddhist protests.

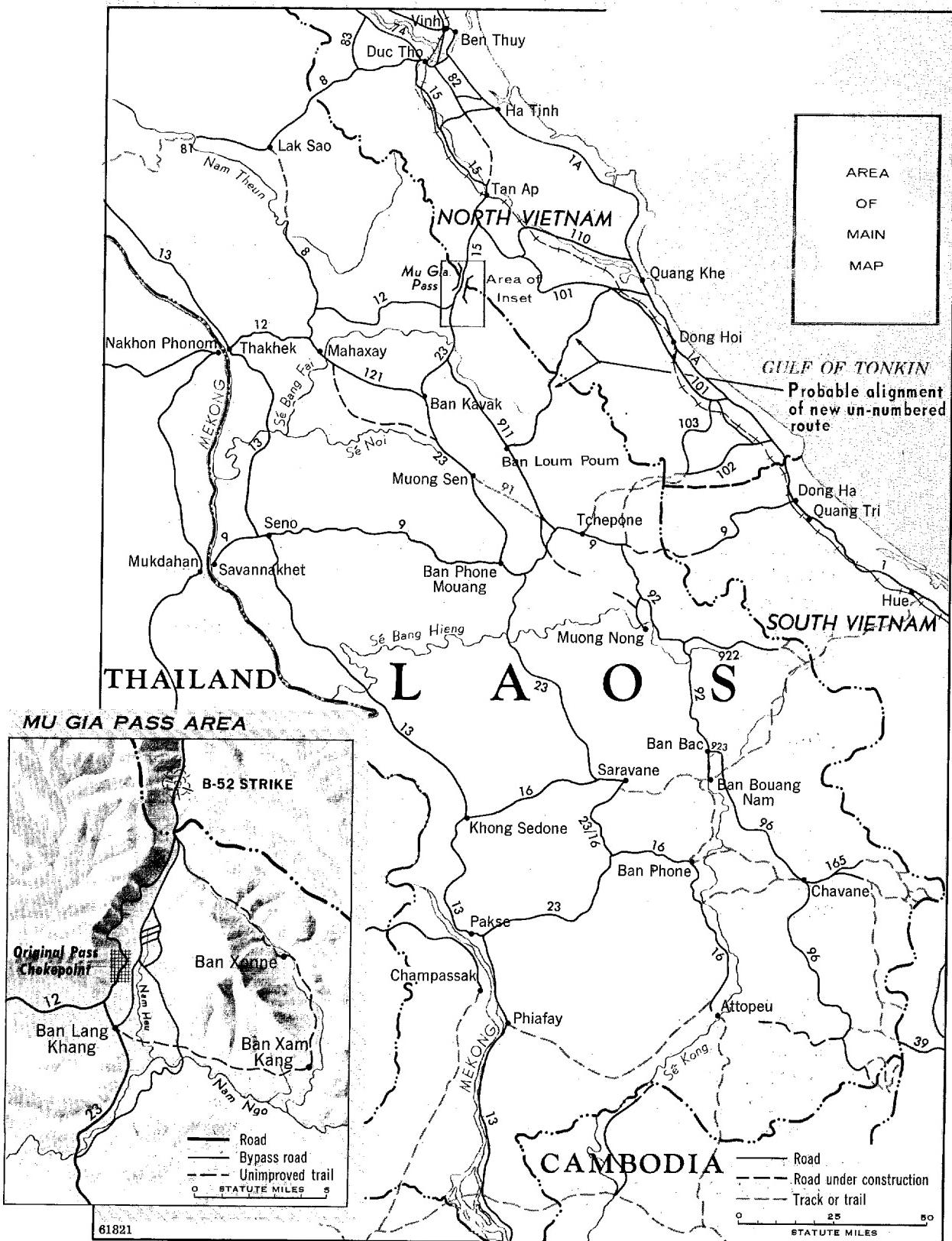
Of some 170 representatives of various religions, [and] political groups and local councils invited to participate in the congress to discuss transitional steps toward civilian rule, a reported 92 persons attended. This indicates only partial, but nevertheless substantial, Buddhist success in their efforts to discredit the congress. Chief of State Thieu, in an address opening the three-day congress, was deliberately vague to avoid any appearance of dictating to the meeting, but attempted to stress the Directorate's readiness to hand over power to responsible civilians in response to pressure from "individual groups" for an accelerated timetable.

In Hue, some 10,000 Buddhist followers today staged a peaceful demonstration and a successful general strike in protest over the congress. The antigovernment radio attacked the congress as "illegal" and an "act of deceit." It claimed almost total success for the Hue Municipal Council and the Thua Thien Provincial Council in their call for a nationwide boycott by other municipal and provincial councils.

The two Vietnamese Marine battalions at Da Nang air base are being returned to Saigon today. Some antigovernment troops in the city were reported yesterday to be abandoning their defensive points, causing expressions of concern by the Da Nang radio, which is continuing its stream of anti-Saigon commentaries. The new I Corps commander, General Dinh, apparently intends to proceed cautiously in trying to reassert central government authority.

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The Ky government has moved two additional army battalions and a supporting company into Saigon to help keep order there. These troops, from the predominately Catholic and well-disciplined 7th Division in the delta, are reportedly under the control of the capital region commander, General Khang.

Buddhist leaders held a major strategy meeting in Saigon last night, apparently in preparation for a resumption of public demonstrations. [redacted]

[redacted] Buddhist Institute Chairman Tam Chau, in disagreement with extremist policies but unwilling to tangle openly with Tri Quang, has effectively retired from institute affairs, leaving control in the hands of the militants.

[redacted] Saigon area commander Khang, who previously reported dissatisfaction among several field-grade officers over the government's lack of strong action against political dissidents, now states that these officers—with Military Security Service chief Colonel Loan as their primary spokesman—are pressing for certain top-level military changes. Although Khang did not associate himself with this group, he has previously stated that he and some other Directorate generals were advocates of stronger measures.]

The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Elements of the US First Infantry Division conducting Operation ABILENE in Phuoc Tuy Province encountered a Viet Cong base camp today. US casualties thus far total 32 killed and 60 wounded. Viet Cong casualties are unknown.

US Air Strikes: Twenty-nine B-52 Stratofortresses hit a two-mile segment of North Vietnamese Route 15 (Laos Route 12) yesterday in an effort to impede movement to the Mu Gia Pass through which virtually all Laos-bound traffic from the DRV now passes. No bomb damage assessment is available.

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Other Major Developments: [The North Vietnamese have been taking steps to develop an alternate route for traffic into Laos. Recent photography and pilot reports disclose that the Communists have nearly completed a major road beginning at Route 101 in North Vietnam and following a generally southwest course into Laos, intersecting Route 911 at Ban Loum Poum. This road could serve as an alternate for Mu Gia Pass and could also allow freight brought down the coast by sea into the Dong Hoi area to be forwarded into Laos, thereby greatly reducing the distance that Laos-bound traffic must travel overland.]

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Pakistan - Communist China: [Claims by high Pakistani officials that Peking has offered large-scale military aid tend to be substantiated by the recent arrival of major military equipment.]

[Some Chinese equipment is already in Pakistani hands. Chinese T-59 tanks were paraded in Rawalpindi on 23 March, and infantry and antiaircraft weapons have also been reported in Pakistan.]

[Several groups of Pakistani Air Force officers and mechanics have been on training missions in China in recent months.]

[Last week the chief of the Pakistani Air Force, in pointing up Pakistan's severe shortage of military equipment, warned the US ambassador that if equipment were not made available from the West, a Chinese offer to supply the bulk of the nation's requirements might be accepted. Pro-Western Finance Minister Shoaib has also stated that his government has a comprehensive offer of Chinese military assistance. China's capabilities, however, are restricted by its own military requirements and limited production.]

[In recent months India has received large-scale military assistance from the USSR and Czechoslovakia, and lesser amounts from some Western countries. Although the Pakistanis have had some success in obtaining arms primarily from international arms dealers at high prices, they have not secured quantities comparable to those obtained by New Delhi.]

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[Pakistan does not consider the USSR as a potential supplier of substantial military aid, largely because of Soviet political commitments in New Delhi. Minister of Commerce Faruque, scheduled for a trade promotion tour in the Middle East and Europe during the next month, is expected to inquire about the availability of arms from France, West Germany, and Czechoslovakia.]

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France: The government and the Gaullist party have launched a full-fledged propaganda campaign in support of De Gaulle's moves against NATO and US bases in France.

Thus far, the government appears to have had some success in persuading the public that ties with the alliance organization can be reduced without losing the fundamental guarantees of the alliance. A mid-March public opinion poll indicates that, by a two-to-one majority, the French public believes the Atlantic alliance plays an essential role in the security of Europe and France. A similar proportion of respondents indicated, however, that Paris should ask for the removal of US bases if Washington refuses to place them under French command.

In assessing the domestic situation at this stage, the US Embassy in Paris comments that De Gaulle is banking on the strong pride, nationalism, and individualism of the French, as well as on their predominant concern with local issues. De Gaulle's decision not to withdraw from the alliance seems to have greatly strengthened the Gaullists' ability to answer opposition charges that Paris is splitting with its allies.

The opposition will have a chance to challenge the government when the National Assembly opens its foreign policy debate on 13 April. A censure motion centering on De Gaulle's NATO moves will be presented at that time, although it has almost no chance of winning the support of an absolute majority of deputies.

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Austria: Austria's 21-year-old coalition between the People's Party and the Socialists may be coming to an end.

The centrist People's Party, which won a parliamentary majority in the 6 March elections, is [threatening] to form a one-party cabinet if the Socialists do not agree by 20 April to enter a new coalition. The Socialists' national committee, which is reported to have a majority opposed to a continuation of the coalition, is to meet shortly to determine the party's position.

Increased People's Party influence is likely to strengthen recent tendencies to leave EFTA in exchange for association with EEC, to favor a build-up of the armed forces, and to increase the influence of private industry--as opposed to nationalized industry--in trade negotiations with Communist countries.

A cabinet made up exclusively of People's Party members would cause uneasiness, at least initially, since Austrians have long believed that coalition government was their guarantee against a recurrence of the bitter hostility and brief civil war of the 1930s.

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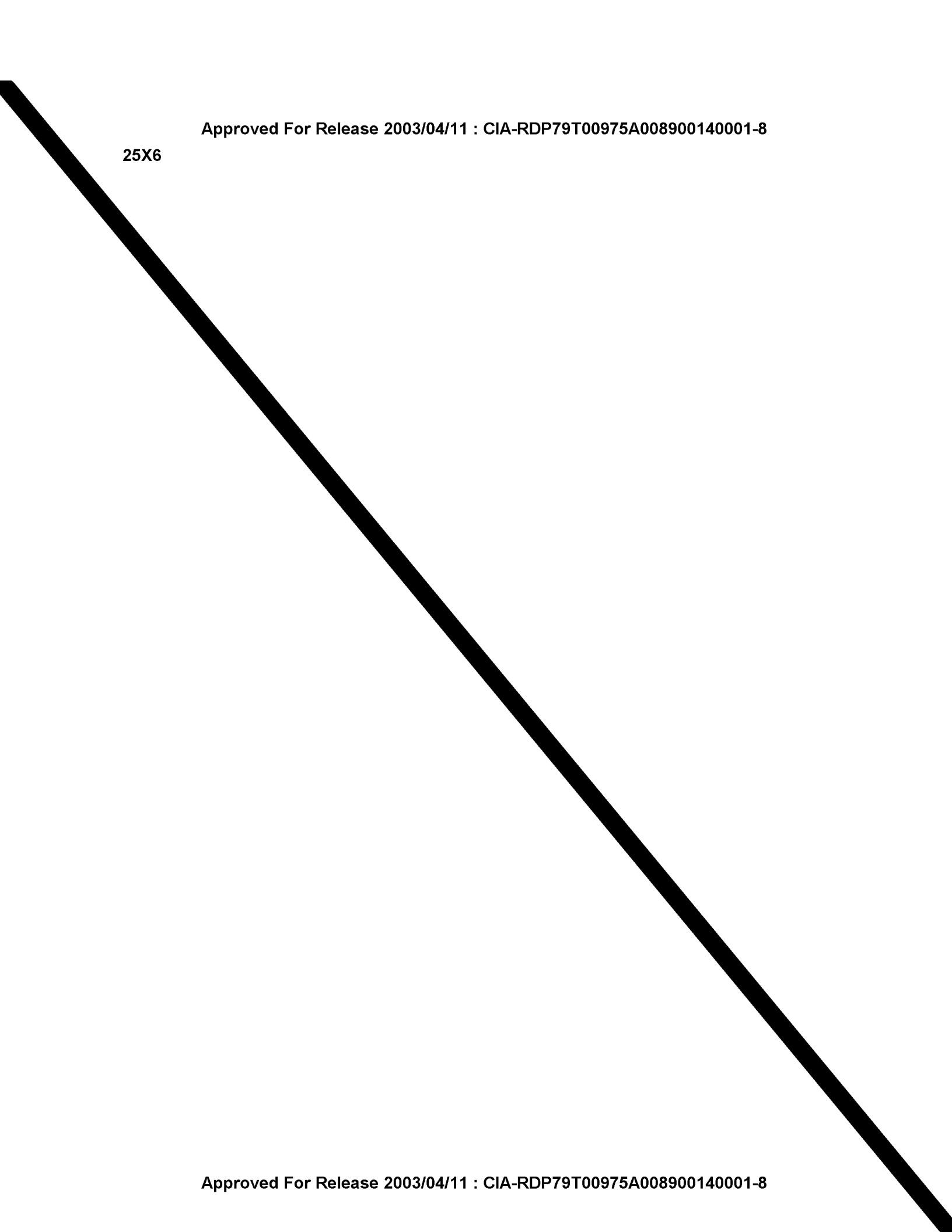
NOTES

Cambodia - North Vietnam: Hanoi's commercial mission in Cambodia is being upgraded to provide political "representation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam." The change was announced by North Vietnam on 11 April, following the recent visit of Hanoi's minister of culture to Phnom Penh. [The British chargé in Cambodia thinks the practical effect will be to raise the North Vietnamese commercial mission, which has operated at a subconsular level since 1962, to something less than full embassy status.] There are no indications that Phnom Penh plans to send a delegation to North Vietnam.

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